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SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: MCC HOLDS FIRST TRIALS

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din reporting cable.

SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) The key concern during the initial cases heard by the new ad Din Province Major Crimes Court was whether local judges would have the courage to carry out their duties or whether they would succumb to intimidation by the insurgency and refuse to hear terrorism cases or dispose of them corruptly. The three defendants on trial were self-confessed members of Al-Qaeda; all were found guilty. Based on comments and reaction from Iraqi Police (IP) officers, it is believed that the verdicts in these three cases will have a very positive effect on the morale of the IP in Salah ad Din Province.
END SUMMARY.

MCC BEGINS HEARING TRIALS

¶3. (U) On September 9, the Salah ad Din Province Major Crimes Court (MCC) opened pursuant to an Order passed by the Chief Justice of Iraq. The new Salah ad Din MCC is located in a heavily fortified complex on FOB Danger in downtown Tikrit. The MCC was specially built for the purpose of hearing terrorism cases. Regular non-terrorism cases will continue to be heard at the old Tikrit City courthouse.

¶4. (U) Prior to the opening of the MCC, the PRT believed that the "traveling judges" concept would be used to staff the court. Under this concept, judges from outside the Province are brought in for 30 day periods to hear terrorism cases. The purpose of using "out of town" judges is of course to minimize the possibility that the insurgency will resort to threats and violence against the judges so as to compromise the integrity of the court. However, the Chief Justice of Iraq declined to approve the use of traveling judges for the Salah ad Din MCC, instead ordering that it be staffed by local judges.

¶5. (U) All of the defendants on trial this week were self-confessed members of Al-Qaeda. All three were found guilty. The defendant in the first trial was convicted of kidnapping) he received a sentence of 15 years in prison. In the second and third cases, the defendants were charged with multiple counts of murder. Having been found guilty, both defendants were sentenced to death.

¶6. (SBU) PRT observes that the victims in the murder cases were Iraqi Police officers. Based on comments and reaction from Iraqi Police (IP) officers in the wake of the verdicts in these cases, it is believed that the verdicts in these three cases will have a very positive effect on the morale of the IP in Salah ad Din Province.

COMMENT

[17.](#) (SBU) COMMENT: PRT is keeping a close watch on the outcome of proceedings at the MCC. PRT remains concerned about the insurgency's ability to influence proceedings at the MCC by threatening the safety of local judges and their families.
END COMMENT.

[18.](#) (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET reporting blog:
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Tikrit>.
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